

The Priviledge of our S A I N T S
In the busines of
P E R J U R Y.

Useful for *GRAND JURIES.*
Agt of p^rbyterian grandjurors

By the Author of HUDIBRAS.

24 Octob. 1681.

That Saints may claim a Dispensation
To Swear and Forswear on occasion,
I doubt not but it will appear
With pregnant light, the point is clear:
Oaths are but words, and words but wind,
Too feeble Implements to bind.
And Saints whom Oaths or Vows oblige,
Know little of their Priviledge:
Further, I mean, than carrying on
Some self-advantage of their own:
For if the Devil, to serve his turn,
Can tell Truth, why the Saints should scorn
When it serves theirs, to Swear and Lye,
I think there's little reason why:
Else h' has a greater pow'r than they,
Which 'twere Impiety to say.
W'are not commanded to forbear
Indefinitely, at all to Swear,
But to Swear idly and in vain,
Without Self-interest or Gain.
For breaking of an Oath, and Lying,
Is but a kind of Self-denying;
A Saint-like vertue, and from hence
Some have broke Oaths by Providence:
Some, to the glory of the Lord
Perjur'd themselves, and broke their word;
And this the constant rule and practice
Of all our late Apostles Acts is.
Was not the Cause at first begun
With Perjury, and carried on?
Was there an Oath the Godly took,
But in due time and place they broke?
Did not our Worthies of the House,
Before they broke the Peace, break Vows:
For having freed us first from both
Th' Allegiance and Supremacy Oath,
Did they not next compel the Nation
To take and break the Protestation?

To take th' Engagement and disclaim it,
Enforc'd by those who first did frame it:
Did they not Swear at first to Fight
For the Kings Safety and his Right?
And after march'd to find him out,
And charg'd him home with Horse and Foot;
And yet still had the confidence
To swear it was in his Defence.
Did they not Swear to Live and Die
With *Effex*, and straight laid him by?
Did they not Swear to maintain Law,
In which that Swearing made a Flaw?
For Protestant Religion Vow,
Which did that vowing disallow?
For Priviledge of Parliament,
In which that Swearing made a Rent?
And since, of all the three not one
Was left in being, 'tis well known.
Did they not Swear in exprefs words,
To prop and back the House of Lords?
And after turn'd out the whole Houseful,
Of Peers as 'dangerous and unuseful?
This tells us plainly what they thought,
That Oaths and Swearing go for nought,
And that by them th'were only meant
To serve for an expedient.
Oaths were not purpos'd more than Law,
To keep the Good and Just in awe,
But to confine the bad and sinful,
Like moral Cattel in a Pinfold.
A Saint's of th' heavenly Realm a Peer;
And as no Peer is bound to Swear,
But on the Gospel of his Honor,
Of which he may dispose as owner;
It follows though the thing be forgery,
And false, they affirm it is no Perjury,
But a meer ceremony, and a breach
Of nothing, but a form of speech,

And



And goes for no more when 'tis took,
 Than meer saluting of the Book.
 Suppose the Scriptures are of force,
 They're but ~~Commissions~~ of course,
 And Saints have freedom to digress,
 And vary from 'em as they please,
 Or mis-interpret them by privat
 Instructions to all Aims they drive at ;
 Then why should we ourselves abidge,
 And curtail our own Priviledge ?
 'Tis the temptation of the Devil
 That makes all humane actions evil :
 For Saints may do the same things by
 The Spirit in sincerity,
 Which other men are tempted to,
 And at the Devils instance do ;
 And yet the action be contrary,
 Just as the Saints and Wicked vary.
 But as on Land there is no Beast,
 But in some Fish at Sea's exprest,
 So in the Wicked there's no Vice,
 Of which the Saints have not a spice ;
 And yet that thing that's pious in
 The one, in th' other is a sin.
 Is't not ridiculous and non-sense
 A Saint should be a slave to Conscience ?
 That ought to be above such Fancies
 As far, as above Ordinances.
 The *Rabbins* write, when any Jew
 Did make to God or Man a Vow,
 Which afterwards he found untoward,
 And stubborn to be kept, or too hard,
 Any three other Jews o'th' Nation
 Might free him from the Obligation ;
 And have not two SS— power to use
 A greater priviledge than three Jews ?
 The Court of Conscience which in man,
 Should be supreme and sovereign ;

Is't fit should be subordinate
 To every petty Court i'th' State,
 And have no power at all, nor shift
 To help it self at a dead list ?
 Why should not Conscience have Vacation,
 As well as other Courts o'th' Nation ?
 Have equal power to Adjourn,
 Appoint Appearance and Return ?
 Do not your Judges give their Verdict
 As if they felt the Cause not heard it ?
 And as they please make matter of Fact
 Run all on one side as they're packt.
 When each man Swears to do his best
 To Damn and Perjure all the rest,
 And bids the Devil take the hinmost,
 Which at this Race is like to win most.
 Nature has made man's breast no windores
 To publish what he does within doors,
 Nor what dark Secrets there inhabit,
 Unless his own rash Folly blab it.
 If Oaths can do a man no good,
 In his own business, why they shou'd
 In other matters do him hurt,
 I think there's little reason for't :
 He that imposes an Oath makes it,
 Not he that for convenience takes it :
 Then how can any man be said
 To break an Oath he never made ?
 These reasons may perhaps look odly
 To th' Wicked, though they evince the Godly
 For if we should defend the Cause
 By the strict Rule of Gospel-Laws,
 And only do what they call just,
 The Cause would quickly fall to dust.
 This we among our selves may speak,
 But to the wicked or the weak
 We must be cautious to declare
 Perfection Truths, such as these are.